

2016-2017 Migratory Game Bird Proposals

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) is posting migratory game bird proposals for the 2016-2017 seasons from **April 1-April 13**.

Beginning with the 2016-17 hunting seasons, a new process and schedule established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in cooperation with states, will be used for setting annual migratory game bird hunting regulations. The new process will allow the Commission to set seasons for all migratory game birds earlier, and at the same time. This means hunters will have more time to plan their hunts, and hunting seasons for all ducks, geese, sandhill cranes, doves, and crows will be available in the same brochure. All migratory game bird seasons will be set by the Commission on April 21, 2016.

Idaho's migratory game bird seasons must fit within guidelines set annually by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for all states in the Pacific Flyway. While states can be more restrictive relative to season length, timing, and bag limits; a State cannot be more liberal than allowed by the maximum federal framework established by the Pacific Flyway of which the IDFG is a member.

Since 1997, the USFWS has allowed LIBERAL (107 days; 7-bird bag) duck seasons, and the Idaho Fish and Game Commission has adopted a 105-day season and a 2-day youth hunt. For ducks and Canada geese, those 107 days can only occur between September 24, 2016 and January 29, 2017. For white-fronted geese and white geese, those 107 days can only occur between September 24, 2016 and March 10, 2017.

The IDFG conducted a hunter opinion survey in 2016 to assess hunter preferences on how to structure waterfowl seasons within the Federal Framework. This information will be used to guide Idaho waterfowl season proposals for the next five years; 2016-2020.

Important results from the 2016 waterfowl hunter preference survey are:

- ✓ Most Idaho waterfowl hunters said they prefer continuous seasons, rather than split seasons.
- ✓ Hunters in southwest Idaho preferred seasons that start and end the waterfowl season later, to allow for hunting opportunities as close as possible to the end of the Federal Framework (as late in January as possible).
- ✓ A majority of hunters in Zone 2 (north and east Idaho) preferred seasons that start the waterfowl season as early as possible in October to allow for hunting opportunities prior to wetlands freezing.

Idaho sets waterfowl seasons by zones. Zones allow Fish and Game to align hunting seasons with biological opportunity, environmental conditions, and social desires. The number of zones Idaho can have is set within the federal framework. Currently, Idaho has three zones for ducks and white-fronted geese; four zones for Canada geese and white geese (please see maps below).

- ✓ Results from this survey will help waterfowl managers reconfigure zones in an attempt to meet the desires of waterfowl hunters across Idaho, for implementation in 2017.

Waterfowl

Youth Waterfowl Season:

Proposed season structure:

Statewide: September 24-25

Ducks

The proposed season structure for ducks is:

Zone 1: October 1, 2016 – January 13, 2017;

Scaup: October 22, 2016 – January 13, 2017

Zone 2: October 1, 2016 – January 13, 2017;

Scaup: October 22, 2016 – January 13, 2017

Zone 3: October 15, 2016 – January 27, 2016;

Scaup: November 5, 2016 – January 27, 2017

Proposed daily bag limit would be 7 ducks; but not more than 2 female mallards, 2 redhead, 3 scaup, 2 pintail or 2 canvasback.

White-fronted Geese

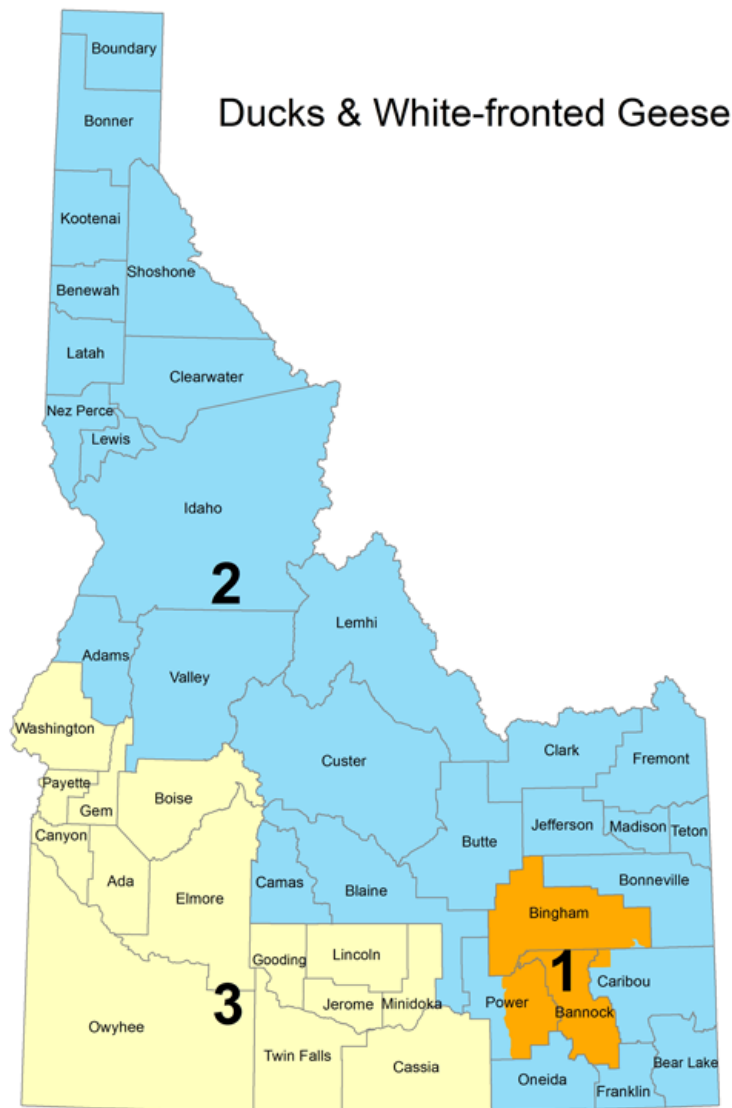
The proposed season structure for white-fronted geese is:

Zone 1: October 1, 2016 – January 13, 2017

Zone 2: October 1, 2016 – January 13, 2017

Zone 3: November 7, 2016 – February 19, 2017

Proposed daily bag limit would be 10 white-fronted geese.



Canada Geese

The proposed season structure for Canada geese is:

Zone 1: October 1, 2016 – January 13, 2017

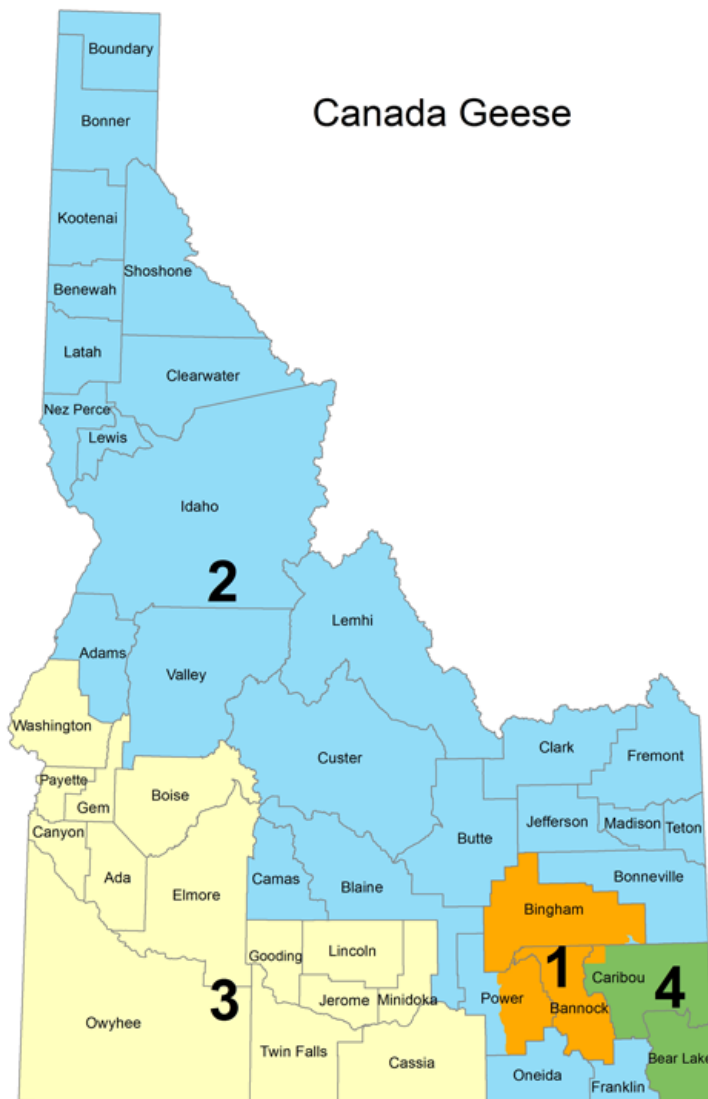
Zone 2: October 1, 2016 – January 13, 2017

Zone 3: October 15, 2016 – January 27, 2017

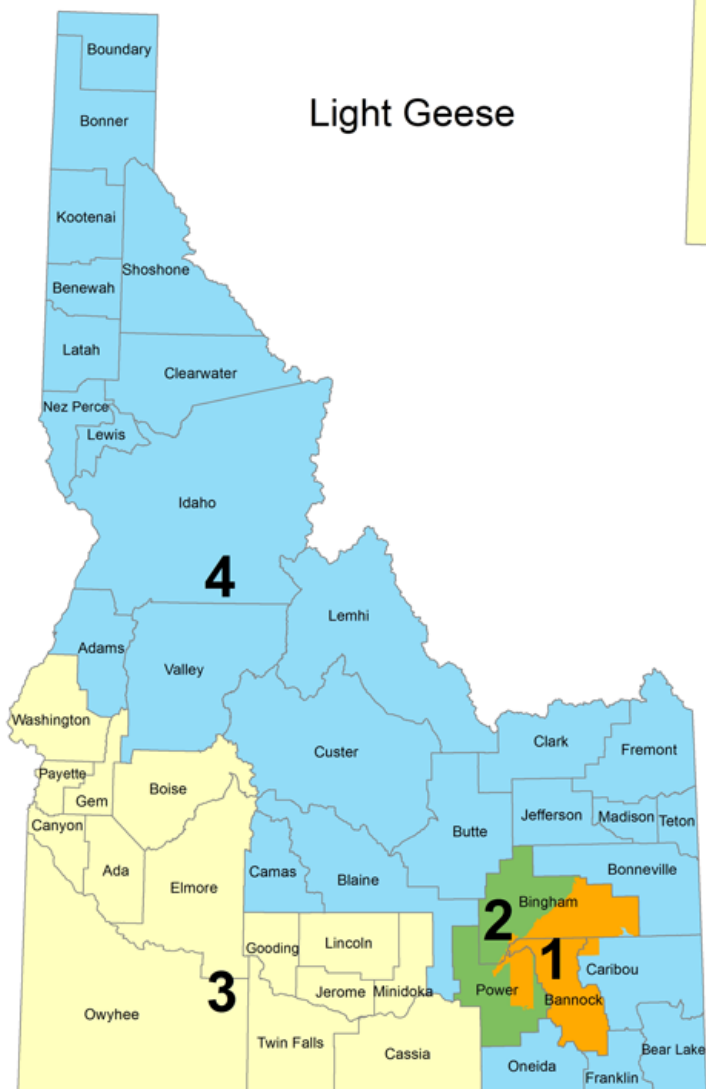
Zone 4: September 1, 2016 – September 15, 2016
and October 16, 2016 – January 13, 2017

Proposed daily bag limit would be 4 Canada geese,
except in Zone 4 during September 1-15, when the
daily bag limit would be 5 Canada geese.

Canada Geese



Light Geese



Light Geese (Snow and Ross's Geese)

The proposed season structure for white geese is:

Zone 1: October 1, 2016 – January 13, 2017

Zone 2: October 29, 2016 – January 13, 2017
and February 11 – March 10, 2017

Zone 3: November 26, 2016 – March 10, 2016

Zone 4: October 1, 2016 – January 13, 2017

Proposed daily bag limit would be 20 white geese.

Sandhill Cranes

The Pacific and Central Flyway Management Plan for the Rocky Mountain Population (RMP) of Sandhill Cranes allows for the regulated harvest of cranes when the population exceeds 15,000, as estimated by the average of the three most recent reliable surveys. Based on the allowable harvest for this population, 1,946 sandhill cranes may be harvested from the RMP during the 2016 hunting season.

Idaho's 2016 crane harvest allocation, as provided by the Flyway Management Plan, is 287 cranes, up from 166 in 2015.

There are five hunt areas in Idaho. To accommodate the increased harvest allocation, the Department proposes the following actions:

- Increase the number of tags available in each hunt area. See table below.
- Create an additional hunt period in some areas.
- Create a closure on the Mud Lake WMA in the Jefferson County Hunt Area to protect an important sandhill crane roost site, which will hold birds in the area longer. The boundary description is as follows:
 - o Beginning at the 1400 E/1750 N intersection, then west following the Mud Lake WMA boundary to the 1100 E/WMA Sparks Canal Road, then north and east following the Sparks Canal Road to the WMA North Bluff Road intersection, then east following the North Bluff Road to the WMA Lower Lake Road, then drawing a straight line south to the beginning point of 1750 N/1400 E intersection.

All tags (465) will be offered on a first-come first-served basis at any vendor as per the allocation below.

Hunt Area	Season	Tags
1 - Bear Lake	9/1-9/15	200
1 - Bear Lake	9/16-9/30	100
2 - Teton	9/1-9/15	30
3 - Fremont	9/1-9/15	35
3 - Fremont	9/16-9/30	35
4 - Jefferson	9/1-9/15	20
4 - Jefferson	9/16-9/30	20
5 - Swan Lake	9/1-9/15	25

The daily limit is 2 cranes for all hunts. The season limit is 2 cranes.

Doves

Dove seasons are guided by the mourning dove harvest strategy for doves in the Western Management Unit, which is based on band returns. The USFWS approved the STANDARD (60 days; 15-bird bag) regulatory alternative for the 2016 season, which allows for a maximum season of 60 days, occurring between September 1 and January 15.

The proposed season structure for doves is:

Statewide: September 1 – October 30

Proposed daily bag limit: 15 mourning and white-winged doves in the aggregate.

American Crow

American crow seasons are set by states following guidance provided for in the Federal Register (i.e., 50 CFR 20.133). The season shall not exceed 124 days during a calendar year, and shall not be permitted during the peak crow nesting period within a State.

The proposed season structure for American crows is:

Statewide: October 1 – January 31

Proposed daily bag limit: no limit.

If you have any comments about the proposed 2016-2017 migratory game bird seasons, please contact your local Fish and Game regional office